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# LETTER DATED 14 NOVEMBER 1997 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the attached letter dated 5 November 1997, together with the enclosed report from the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States, in accordance with the request contained therein.

(Signed) Kofi ANNAN

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Annex

Letter dated 5 November 1997 from the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the first report of the Economic Community of West African States Committee of Five on Sierra Leone, covering the period from 8 October to 5 November 1997, as requested by the Security Council in paragraph 9 of resolution 1132 (1997) concerning the situation in Sierra Leone, for onward transmission to the President of the Security Council.

(Signed) Lansana KOUYATE
Executive Secretary

Appendix

First report of the Economic Community of West African States Committee of Five on Sierra Leone to the Security Council made pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997)

INTRODUCTION

1. On 25 May, 1997, a section of the military in Sierra Leone violently overthrew the legitimate government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

2. The **coup d'etat** was not only notably bloody but it also resulted in very tragic consequences on all class of citizens of the country. Immediately upon siezing power, the coupists threw open the prisons thereby releasing all sorts of criminals and convicts into the streets of the country and invited the rebel forces of the RUF, who had hitherto been scatterd in the jungles of the country, into the city of Freetown. Vital national assets including the Central Bank of Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Finance were looted and vandalised. Hundreds of thousands of innocent people were forced to flee as refugees into neighbouring countries. These refugees had since constituted an additional burden on the societies and fragile economies of these countries. Guinea received the largest number of refugees, including the overthrown President KABBAH and most of his cabinet members and the Sierra Leonean members of Parliament. Some commercial offices, NGOs and international organisations have also relocated to Conakry, Guinea. Liberia too received a good number of refugees, at a time when it was on the verge of consolidating the peace efforts and bringing an end to its seven-year old civil war. In fact, the situation in Sierra Leone constitutes a threat to the peace, stability and security of the entire sub-region.

3. The United Nations therefore became seized of the situation Under chapters VII and VIII of the United Nations Charter, and in collaboration with ECOWAS took

decisive action leading to the adoption of Resolution 1132(1997) of 8 October, 1997. This report is in response to the request of the UN Resolution.

4. For a better undestanding of the situation it appears necessary to give a brief history of the crisis in Sierra Leone.

## BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CRISIS

5. Sierra Leone is situated on the west coast of Africa, latitudes 7° and 10° North and longitudes 10.50° and 13° West. It shares common borders with the Republic of Liberia and the Republic of Guinea. Its coastline stretches some 300 miles, extending from the boundary with Guinea to the boundary with Liberia.

6. Sierra Leone got independence from Britain on 27 April 1961. The Country attained Republic Status on 19 April, 1971.

7. Upon its gaining independence, Sir Milton Margai became its first Prime Minister under the umbrella of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP). He died in 1964. His junior brother, Sir Albert Margai was immediately sworn in as Prime Minister by the British Governor General. He governed the Country until elections in 1967. These elections however ended in chaos and produced Sierra Leone's first military rule. A year later, 1968, another coup organised by warrant officers paved the way for the return of Siaka Stevens from exile in Guinea. Siaka Stevens of the All Peoples Congress (APC) ruled the country from 1968 to 1985. Retired Brigadier Joseph Saidu Momoh took over the reigns of power also under the APC in 1985 and

ruled the Country until his overthrow by the army in April, 1992. On the scene came Captain Valentine Strasser as Chairman of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) regime. An in-house coup d'etat by the military overthrew Strasser in January 1996 and Brigadier Maada Bio became the new Chairman of the NPRC. This took place in the middle of preparations for democratic elections. The elections were held on 26 and 27 February and President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and his SLPP party emerged victorious. He was sworn into office as the democratically-elected President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, until his undemocratic overthrow on 25 May, 1997.

8. The present crisis in Sierra Leone began in 1991 when rebel elements called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) under the leadership of Corporal Foday Sankoh began guerilla warfare against the Government of Sierra Leone. As the guerilla warfare intensified, resulting in very horrifying consequences on villages around the Country, and in the face of demonstrated inability of the regular Sierra Leone armed forces to contain the situation, locals, with the active support of the Government organised vigilante groups to ward off the atrocities committed by the rebels. These vigilante groups, made up primarily of local hunters and called the Kamajors, gradually grew into prominence with the several successes they achieved over the rebels.

9. Although the Kamajors were initially assisting the soldiers against the RUF rebels, the relationship between the Kamajors and the civilian populaton on the one hand and the soldiers, on the other, soon became strained. The Kamajors and the soldiers on several occasions fought each other.

10. The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire with the assistance of the OAU and the United Nations came unto the scene to mediate between the antagonists. This mediation effort produced, on 30 November, 1995, the Abidjan Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone under Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the RUF. Unfortunately however, enough efforts and time were not given for the successful implementation of the Abidjan Agreement before the unfortunate incident of 25 May, 1997.

## REACTIONS TO THE CRISIS

11. The OAU Heads of State gathering in Harare, Zimbabwe for the 33rd Ordinary Summit of the OAU strongly condemned the unlawful take-over of power and called for the immediate restoration of constitutional order to the Country. They urged the international community not to recognise the illegal regime in Sierra Leone and called on the leaders of ECOWAS to take the lead in restoring constitutional order to the country. The Secretary-General of the United Nations who was also in Harare for the Summit endorsed the OAU position. The Secretary-General's position was reinforced by a statement of the President of the UN Security Council on 27 May 1997 condemning the coup d'etat.

12. Meanwhile, the Chairman of ECOWAS had commenced measures aimed at resolving the Sierra Leone crisis. His consultations with the leaders of the sub-region resulted in the convening of a meeting of ECOWAS Foreign Ministers in Conakry on 26 June, 1997. The meeting reviewed the situation in Sierra Leone and recommended ways and means of achieving a speedy restoration of constitutional order to the

country. It identified three objectives to be pursued by ECOWAS in Sierra Leone. These are:

(i) the early reinstatement of the legitimate government of President Tejan KABBAH:

(ii) the return of peace and security and

(iii) the resolution of issue of refugees and displaced persons.

13. The Foreign Ministers recommended a combination of three means to be applied in the pursuit of these objectives. These were dialogue, imposition of sanctions, embargo and lastly, the use of force. Furthermore, the Foreign Ministers established a Ministerial Committee of Four, comprising the Foreign Ministers of Nigeria, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, to be joined by representatives of the OAU and ECOWAS Secretariats. This Committee was charged with implementing the recommendations and decisions on Sierra Leone. (The Committee was in August 1997 expanded into a Committee of Five by including the Foreign Minister of Liberia).

14. After the Conakry meeting, the newly established Committee on Sierra Leone submitted a report to the current Chairman of ECOWAS, General Sani Abacha in Abuja on 6 July, 1997. The Chairman endorsed the recommendations of the Foreign Ministers and considered it appropriate that ECOWAS' position should be conveyed to the Secretary-General of the UN and the UN Security Council, by the Committee of Four.

15. ECOWAS and the UN individually and collectively continued their efforts to bring an end to the crisis.

16. The ECOWAS Ministerial Committee of Four (now Five) on Sierra Leone, held several meetings, two of which were with the illegal regime in Abidjan. These negotiations however failed due to the intransigence of the junta thereby compelling the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State to adopt a sanctions and embargo regime against the junta, on 29 August 1997.

17. The UN, on its part, supported the ECOWAS initiative, and in order to extend the scope of the sanctions to the International community, adopted Resolution 1132 (1997) on 8 October, 1997.

18. It would be recalled that the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee of Five on Sierra Leone decided to resume negotiations with the junta in accordance with its objectives. It would be recalled also that this decision had received the Security Council support under paragraph 3 of Resolution 1132 (1997).

19. For this purpose therefore, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Five on Sierra Leone met in Conakry, Republic of Guinea, on 22 and 23 October, 1997. The Committee was assisted by Professor Ibrahima Fall, who attended the negotiations on behalf of the UN Secretary-General.

20. The Ministers met with a thirteen-member delegation representing the junta. The Committee dwelt extensively on the need for the junta to appreciate fully that

national reconciliation was a pre-condition for the return of peace to Sierra Leone. They were therefore enjoined to let the cause of peace in Sierra leone override all other considerations and to be mindful of the fact that finding a peaceful resolution lay primarily with Sierra Leoneans themselves.

21. The representatives of Major Johnny Paul Koromah were quick to express their desire to resume discussions with the Committee of Five. They stated their willingness to work towards peace and to negotiate in good faith. They explained that the junta had no intention of remaining in power until 2001 as they had previously announced. They had merely taken that date as an objective: a vision.

22. Major Koromah's representatives considered as unfortunate the imposition of sanctions taken against Sierra Leone. They promised to declare an immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, as a mark of good faith and to demonstrate their commitment to peace.

23. Following extensive consultations between the junta's representatives, various telephone conversations between them and Major Koromah and constructive discussions with the Committee of Five, the junta agreed to return Sierra Leone to constitutional governance within a period of six months, effective from 22 October 1997 and agreed on the modalities for restoring President Kabbah to office.

24. The ECOWAS peace plan containing this conclusion and a timetable for its implementation was agreed upon and signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Guinea and by the junta represented by Mr. Alimany

Pallo Bangura, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the AFRC and Colonel Abdul Karim Sesay, Secretary-General of the AFRC. Professor Ibrahima Fall, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs representing the UN Secretary-General and Miss Adwoa Coleman of the OAU Conflict Resolution Division representing the OAU Secretary-General also signed as witnesses (previously circulated in document S/1997/824, annex II).

25. The ECOWAS peace plan for Sierra Leone provides for :

- the reinstatement of the legitimate government of President Tejan Kabbah within a period of six months;
- the immediate cessation of hostilities;
- cooperation of the junta with ECOMOG in order to peacefully enforce the sanctions;
- disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants;
- the provision of humanitarian assistance;
- return of refugees and displaced persons;
- immunities and guarantees to the leaders of the May 25, 1997 coup d'etat; and
- modalities for broadening the power base in Sierra Leone.

## REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN SIERRA LEONE BEFORE THE SIGNING OF THE PEACE PLAN (FROM 8 OCTOBER 1997 TO 22 OCTOBER 1997)

26. This part of the report covers the period between 8 October 1997, the date when

the Security Council adopted Resolution 1132(1997) and 23 October 1997, the date when the ECOWAS Peace Plan was signed. The situation in Sierra Leone which was bad enough at the inception of the coup d'etat deteriorated and changed for the worse during this period, despite the pressure put on the junta by ECOWAS, the UN and the International Community. The junta continued to remain defiant and intransigent towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis and the eventual restoration of the democratically elected government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. It was clear that the intention of the illegal regime was to fleece the country economically and in the process inflict untold hardship and suffering on the population by embarking on the scorch earth policy. Infact this period marked a turning point in the junta's preconceived determination to remain in power at all cost. The illegal regime persistently attacked and harassed ECOMOG troops; including the employment of massive propaganda to achieve their unpopular goal.

27. Despite world-wide condemnation, the junta in Sierra Leone continued to refuse to discuss the handover of power to President Kabbah, rather, the junta showed determination to perpetuate its illegal regime in power. The regime went ahead to appoint its cabinet and established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) as its highest ruling body. The general public in Sierra Leone remained resolved that the illegal regime must quit for the legitimate democratic government. The resentment of the people towards the junta was seen in the various demonstraitions organised by the Sierra Leonean's civilian populace notably students, trade unions and other pressure groups.

28. In reacting to the hostile and uncomfortable situation in which it finds itself, the junta continued to mistreat, detain and even kill vocal opponents of the regime. Properties of all known members of the opposition were destroyed while there was a massive hunt for leaders of the opposition group. The junta also continued to send emissaries to garner support for its illegal government while making efforts to pile up military arsenal to defend itself against forceful ejection. It continued to recruit and train unwilling citizens to fight its illegal course. On the whole, however, the junta could still not claim any followership because the majority of the Sierra Leonean people continued to clamour for the restoration of the legitimate government of President Tejan Kabbah.

29. The violations became more pronounced and rampant with each passing day during this period, resulting in the continuous exodus of Sierra Leoneans into neighbouring countries to escape the junta's brutalities. Citizens were dispossessed of their houses and personal effects to provide accommodation and comfort for the AFRC members. ECOMOG intelligence uncovered a plan by the junta to abduct ECOWAS citizens, especially Nigerians, Guineans and Ghanaians and hold them hostage to serve as a human shield and a bargaining chip for future negotiations.

30. The AFRC and RUF continued to brutalise the citizens of Sierra Leone. The most common excuse for these acts is the allegation that the victims are supporters of President Tejan Kabbah and are engaged in passing information to FM 98.1 of President Kabbah.

**SITUATION REPORT IN SIERRA LEONE AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE PEACE PLAN (22 OCTOBER 1997 TO 5 NOVEMBER 1997)**

31. This part of the report covers the period beginning from the day the peace plan was signed to 5 November, 1997.

32. Cessation of Hostilities : All hostilities have ceased. Combatants are holding on to their positions.

33. Implementation of the Peace Plan : The AFRC/RUF junta has agreed to meet and discuss with the ECOMOG High Command on modalities for the implementation of the Peace Plan. This meeting is scheduled to be held within the week beginning 3 November, 1997.

34. Violations of the Sanctions: Merchant ships continue to enter Sierra Leone ports to discharge their cargoes.

35. Effects of the Sanctions: There is currently acute scarcity of petroleum, petroleum products and food.

36. Humanitarian Services : Only ECOMOG is currently rendering humanitarian services. The situation of displaced persons and refugees who have flooded ECOMOG-controlled areas had worsened due to absence of relief materials.

37. Violations of the Peace Plan: Major Victor King, the AFRC/RUF spokesman was reported in a radio broadcast to have said that the junta had taken delivery of modern sophisticated weapons from some developed countries and was therefore ready to engage ECOMOG in warfare.

38. Human Rights Violations : The illegal harrassment, arrest and detention of innocent citizens have continued unabated. During this reporting period, the AFRC/RUF junta had carried out the following human rights violations.

- On 23 October 1997, the very day the ECOWAS Peace Plan was signed, there was an all night shooting and looting in Freetown resulting in the killing of two persons and injury of seventeen others.

- On 24 October, 1997, residents of Cockril Bay, Murray Town, Lablin off Wilkinson road and Collegeant School Road, all in Freetown, were heavily teargased by the AFRC. A lot of people were suffocated and hospitalised.

- On 24 October, 1997, Mr. Suleiman Bah was shot by three soldiers led by a lieutenant around York village by Pennisula Road.

- On 25 October, 1997, ten (10) soldiers of the Sierra Leone army were executed.

- Two civilians, namely Mr Alfred Koromah and Mr. Abdulazeez Kamara

were shot in Freetown. also on 25 October 1997.

- The AFRC/RUF illegal regime has fully jammed the Radio FM 98.1 frequency being used by the Government of President Tejan Kabbah to transmit to his people. The junta is now transmitting on the same frequency.

39. **The leader of the AFRC/RVF junta delivered a radio broadcast on 4 November 1997. The broadcast is a comment on the ECOWAS Peace Plan.**

## ENFORCEMENT OF ECOWAS AND UNITED NATIONS SANCTIONS BY ECOMOG

40. ECOMOG activities in Sierra Leone have been guided by the decision of the ECOWAS Heads of States and Government and the UN Resolution (1132) of 8 October 1997. ECOMOG operations are tailored towards enforcing the blockade of supplies of petroleum products and military hard and soft ware to the junta. Consequently, ECOMOG's operations are directed at preventing the entry of ships to the ports, blocking off of land supply routes and denying the junta the use of its air space for operations. ECOMOG also inspects all vehicles, vessels and aircraft going into Sierra Leone to verify that their cargo contain only humanitarian supplies.

41. ECOMOG operations have been largely handicapped by lack of serviceable ships to effect this blockade by sea. The above notwithstanding, ECOMOG is enforcing the embargo. ECOMOG's fleet of aircraft have done a tremendous job in

scaring off defiant ships and providing close air support for its troops. The illegal regime's reaction to the blockade was to attack ECOMOG positions with a view to breaking out. This has not been successful since ECOMOG forces have always effectively reacted to such attacks. The regime is however quick at accusing ECOMOG through its propaganda, that civil targets are being attacked. The truth, however, is that the junta's anti aircraft guns are deliberately deployed in the civilian populated areas to forestall ECOMOG reprisals. In carrying out its mandate, ECOMOG had continued to ensure that the innocent and law abiding citizens do not suffer.

## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

42. The worsening situation of the crisis in Sierra Leone has led to the increase in the number of Sierra Leone refuges in the neighbouring States of Guinea and Liberia. This has further threatened peace and security in the sub-region. Guinea has approximately 450,000 refugees including both Liberians and Sierra Leoneans. This number increases on a daily basis. Even though the UNHCR put the figures of Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia at between 110,000 and 120,000. We are aware that the refugees as at mid October, 1997 are distributed as follows:

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|---|---|---|---|
| a. | Samukai Town | - | 7,071 |
| b. | VOA I Camp | - | 5,209 |
| c. | Ministry of Health (MOH) Camp | - | 860 |
| d. | Zuannah Town | - | 4,262 |
| . | Banjor Town | - | 6,258 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| f. | Sinje (Grand Cape Mount County | - | 4,000 |
| g. | Congo Mano | - | 7,725 |
| h. | Margibi County | - | 177 |
| i. | Lofa County | - | 65,000 |
| j. | Bong County | - | 2,000 |
| k. | Bomi County | - | 1,500 |

43. It is also of note that most of the troops of the Sierra Leonean Contingent in ECOMOG now accommodate their families in Monrovia due to the crisis in their patrimony. It is important to assist the refugees, most of whom have been dispossessed of their personal effects by some elements of the rebels.

44. The number of internally displaced persons had greatly increased. ECOMOG locations are safe havens for the internally displaced persons and refugees. Humanitarian supplies continue to pass freely through ECOMOG-controlled areas to the needy, while protecting vital installations and public utilities. Combat patrols are regularly conducted to create a conducive atmosphere for ECOMOG's operations and confidence building patrols had also been embarked upon to assure the citizenry of their security in ECOMOG protected areas. ECOMOG had rendered assistance to the civil populace under its controlled areas in the provision of medication, food, water and security.

45. ECOMOG notified all Humanitarian Agencies and NGOs who would wish to bring in relief materials that they would be allowed into Sierra Leonean territorial waters upon clearance by ECOMOG. They were to be checked to confirm that only

humanitarian goods, as declared by them, were brought into Sierra Leone. Inspection of vessels sailing from Europe, the Far East, North & South America and the Mediterranean would be conducted in Guinea while those coming from South Africa, Gabon, Nigeria and Ghana would be inspected in Liberia before proceeding to Sierra Leone to berth and discharge their cargo. This was an interim measure adopted until ECOMOG vessels are positioned close to the port of Freetown.

46. It should be recalled that the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee of Five on Sierra Leone had, during its Fifth Meeting held in Abuja on 10 and 11 October 1997 directed the ECOWAS Executive Secretary to establish a technical committee to work out appropriate modalities for the:

(i) creation of safe havens,

(ii) establishment of humanitarian corridors for delivery of relief materials,

(iii) registration of NGOs.

The Technical Committee was also tasked by the Ministers to advise on all issues relating to the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

47. In compliance with this mandate, the Executive Secretary established a Technical Committee for the implementation of ECOWAS Decisions and the UN Resolution.

The Technical Committee is composed of the Ambassadors of the Committee of Five accredited to Nigeria, namely, the Ambassadors of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea,

Ghana and Liberia. Nigeria is to be represented by a representative of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Also on the Technical Committee are three (3) members of staff of the ECOWAS Secretariat and the ECOMOG Liaison Officer in the Secretariat.

48. The Committee held its inaugural meeting on 28 October 1997 and agreed to the following working modalities :

- The Committee will maintain constant touch with ECOMOG. at both its headquarters in Monrovia and its field operations in Sierra Leone. so as to closely monitor the situation.

- The Committee will work with ECOMOG and designated representatives in ECOWAS Member States and Humanitarian agencies to evolve a simplified and speedy process for the delivery of humanitarian relief materials.

- Considering the fact that most humanitarian agencies had, due to security reasons, relocated their offices to neighbouring states from Sierra Leone, the Committee decided to work closely with the national focal points and the humanitarian agencies in those countries i.e Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO ECOWAS ON CROSS-BORDER**

**RELIEF OPERATIONS INTO SIERRA LEONE**

49. At the request of the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee of Five on Sierra Leone, the UN provided ECOWAS with a set of recommendations on the modalities for humanitarian cross-border relief operations into Sierra Leone and the mechanism by which categories of relief items would be exempt from ECOWAS sanctions.

50. ECOWAS had studied these recommendations and has accepted that there is an urgent need to establish a simple, practical and efficient mechanism to deal with requests tor exemptions and delivery of humanitarian relief assistance. For this purpose, the Executive Secretary is despatching a team to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia to meet the relevant Government organs, humanitarian agencies and concerned NGOs.

51. ECOWAS also accepts the proposal that each ECOWAS Member State shall designate a Responsible Ministry as "focal point" as part of the mechanism that will, as required, to attend the day-to-day matters connected with the implementation of exemptions related issues.

52. ECOWAS has further decided that it shall be the responsibility of the ECOWAS Technical Committee on Sanction, ECOMOG, UN Humanitarian Coordinator and the focal points in Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire to monitor and report on humanitarian cross-border operations from those countries into Sierra Leone.

53. The ECOWAS Technical Committee on Sanctions will elaborate further on these proposals as well as monitor closely the operations in these countries and other ECOWAS Member States.

54. Lastly, It is desirous that ECOWAS enters into a Protocol for Humanitarian Agencies in Sierra Leone with the United Nations as soon as possible.

## CONCLUSIONS

55. ECOWAS expresses its appreciation to the UN, the United Nations Security Council and the UN Secretary-General as well as the OAU for their cooperation and assistance to ECOWAS and renewed its appeal to the UN, OAU, ECOWAS Member States and the international community to provide necessary assistance for the realisation of its objectives in Sierra Leone, including appropriate humanitarian assistance to the refugees especially in the neighbouring countries of Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire as well as to displaced persons and to facilitate their return.

56. ECOWAS is committed to continue negotiations with the junta towards effective and prompt implementation of the peace plan.

57. ECOWAS, the OAU, UN and the rest of the international community should continue to put pressure on the illegal regime so that it could comply with the ECOWAS peace plan within its stipulated time frame.

58. ECOWAS Member States are urged to strenghten the operational capacities of ECOMOG in Sierra Leone to enable the force carry out effectively the mission assigned to it in the Decision of the Heads of State and Government. the UN Security Council Resolution and the ECOWAS Peace Plan for Sierra Leone.

59. ECOWAS appeals to the international community to provide ECOMOG with the necessary material and logistic support.

60. The international community is urged to assist with the reintegration of disarmed former fighters into their various communities.

61. The United Nations should assist in obtaining emergency humanitarian aid for the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in Sierra Leone.

62. ECOWAS requests the United Nations Security Council to send a team of United Nations military observers to participate in the monitoring and verification of complete cessation of hostilities. as envisaged in the ECOWAS Peace Plan for Sierra Leone.

63. ECOWAS appeals to the Un Secretary-General to use his good offices to urgently establish a Contact Group on Sierra Leone.

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